

I. Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-2, 5-8, 11-18, and 21 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 8, and 13 are independent.

Claims 1-2, 5-8, and 11-18 were finally rejected as being unpatentable over Melocco and Wedell, for the reasons detailed at pages 2-7 of the Office Action. Applicants respectfully traverse all art rejections.

In the January 29, 2004 Advisory Action, the Examiner addressed Applicants arguments re (i) Wedell teaching of thickened ends, and (ii) elastomeric teachings in the art. However, the Examiner has not addressed an argument also asserted in the January 6, 2004 Amendment. Concretely, Applicants submit that none of the cited art discloses or suggests the following features recited in each of the independent claims:

at least one end segment comprising two narrowings and one swelling, the maximum internal diameter of that end segment being less than the maximum internal diameter of non-end segments of the returning bush

See Fig. 5 of the subject application (copy attached) showing that the maximum internal diameter of the end segment (D4) is less than the maximum internal diameter of non-end segments (D2). Compare this with the attached Fig. 4 of Wedell showing that the maximum internal diameters of all segments are the same. In the January 6, 2004 Amendment, Applicants stated:

Wedell simply does not disclose an end segment having two narrowings and one swelling wherein the *maximum* internal diameter of such end segment is less than the *maximum* internal diameter of non end segments. If the Examiner maintains this rejection, he is respectfully requested to demonstrate on the record precisely where Wedell discloses these claimed features.

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to specify, on the record, precisely where Wedell discloses these claimed features.

In view of the above remarks, it is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice thereof is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 625-3507. All

correspondence should continue to be directed to our address
given below.

Respectfully submitted,



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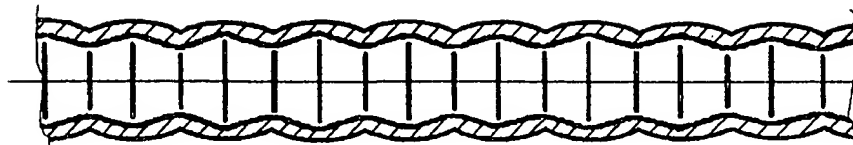


Fig. 4

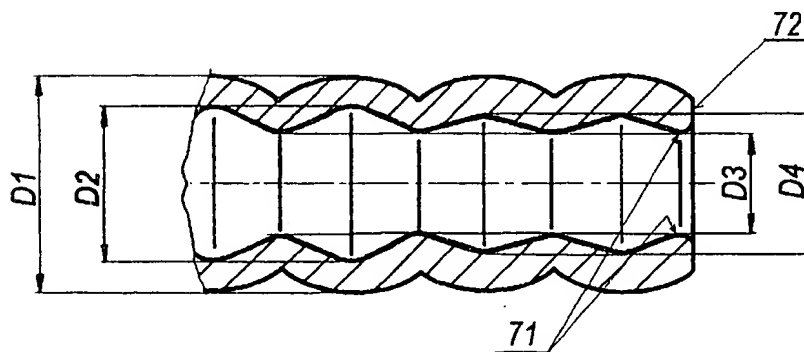


Fig. 5

FIG. 4

